

**State of New Jersey
Office of the Public Defender
News Release**

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**Public Defender Yvonne Smith Segars to Be Honored
By Rutgers-Camden Law School with Mary Philbrook Award**

CAMDEN -- New Jersey Public Defender Yvonne Smith Segars has been selected to receive the 2009 Mary Philbrook Award from the Women's Law Caucus at the Rutgers School of Law-Camden.

Ms. Segars, who has served as the state's public defender since 2002, will receive her award during a special ceremony and reception from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 1, 2009, at the Rutgers-Camden campus.

The award, named after the first woman admitted to the New Jersey Bar, recognizes the achievements of a leading advocate for civil rights, social justice and equality. Additionally, Philbrook is remembered for her instrumental role in establishing New Jersey's first legal aid society.

As Public Defender, Ms. Segars leads an agency of 1,100 employees, including a staff of approximately 600 attorneys, and the services of more than 1,300 outside counsel. The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) provides a multitude of services to indigent adults and juveniles, particularly in the area of criminal defense. The agency represents abused and neglected children through the Office of Law Guardian and individuals facing termination of parental rights through the Office of Parental Representation.

Ms. Segars, who will celebrate her 25th year as an attorney next year, is a staunch advocate for the poor and disenfranchised. As a pioneer in the New Jersey drug court movement, Ms. Segars was a founding member of the New Jersey Network of Drug Court Professionals and was the first drug court public defender in Essex County. After becoming Public Defender, she created the first statewide drug court unit in the agency.

Ms. Segars serves on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Drug

Court Professionals, and is a core faculty member for the Justice Management Institute and the National Drug Court Institute. A peer reviewer and consultant for the U.S. Department of Justice, she continues to aggressively participate in and advocate for drug courts both nationally and locally.

Ms. Segars has also taken a leadership role in collaborative efforts in juvenile justice reform. The OPD actively participates on both statewide and local stakeholder groups participating in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and has participated from the inception of this reform effort. New Jersey has been selected as a model site and will have the opportunity to mentor stakeholders from other JDAI states.

More recently, Public Defender Segars joined Rutgers School of Law-Camden and Rutgers School of Law-Newark to lead the Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network (JIDAN), funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. New Jersey is one of only eight states to participate in this MacArthur Models for Change Project.

As New Jersey's Law Guardian, Ms. Segars launched initiatives in the child welfare reform movement and has been a member of the Governor's Cabinet for Children since its creation in 2003. She sits on the Board of Advisors for the Office of the Child Advocate, the Division of Youth and Family Services Staffing and Outcome Review Panel, and is chair of that group's Subcommittee on Juveniles in Detention.

Ms. Segars' extensive involvement in therapeutic jurisprudence and reform efforts in both juvenile justice and child welfare reflects her keen sense of the need for a more holistic approach to representing clients, particularly children.

Early in her tenure, Ms. Segars recognized the significant overlap between client populations in child welfare and delinquency cases and appointed a single Assistant Public Defender to oversee the representation of children in both case types. The Public Defender's more global perspective provides excellent opportunities for joint training on substantive topics affecting both populations and collaboration between law guardians and juvenile defenders representing children.

Ms. Segars is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA). She is vice-chair of NLADA's Defender Policy Group and serves on the organization's Chief Defender Policy Group. Ms. Segars is Vice-Chair of the NJ State Sentencing Commission, which is charged with the review and reform of NJ's sentencing scheme and underlying policies and the a member of the New Jersey State Criminal Disposition Commission.

In 2005, Ms. Segars received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Kean University. In 2004, she received the Rutgers Law School Distinguished Alumna Award and the Leadership Award from the Association of Black Women Lawyers. She

received her J.D. from Rutgers School of Law-Newark, and her bachelor's degree in psychology from Kean University.

Contributions to the Philbrook Award ceremony help to support pro bono and service programs offered by the Rutgers-Camden law school. The event will be held in Campus Center, located on Third Street, between Cooper Street and the Benjamin Franklin Bridge on the Rutgers-Camden Campus.

For more information about the Philbrook Award ceremony and reception, contact Terry McCuen at mccuen@camden.rutgers.edu or visit camlaw.rutgers.edu